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List 33

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RICHARD HAMILTON

Pink or Blue?

The subject derives from a group of Andrex advertisements that was very evident in the colour supplements in the early '60s introducing the new range of tinted toilet papers then being marketed. 'Soft pink' or 'Soft blue' with the particular colour quality suffusing the whole image – always that of two girls ambiguously posed in a forest glade.

Nature is beautiful. Pink from a morning sun filters through a tissue of Autumn leaves. Golden shafts gleam through the perforated vaulting of the forest to illuminate a stage set-up for the Sunday supplement voyeur. Andrex discreetly presents a new colour magazine range. A pink as suggestively soft as last week's blue – soft as pink flesh under an Empire négligé. The woodland equipped with every convenience. A veil of soft focus vegetation screens the peeper from the sentinel. Poussin? Claude? No, more like Watteau in its magical ambiguity.

Sometimes advertisements make me wax quite poetical. None more so than the series by Andrex showing two young ladies in the woods. I have, on occasions, tried to put into words that peculiar mixture of reverence and cynicism that 'Pop' culture induces in me and that I try to paint. I suppose that a balancing of these reactions is what I used to call non-Aristotelian or, alternatively, cool.

January 72

Flowers

Nothing is more likely to stimulate my interest in a new subject than to notice a major pictorial genre that I have left unexplored. Over a period of twenty years or so the main classes have been covered: interior, nude, portrait, landscape, seascape, architecture, still-life, self-portrait – these are usually seen first as categories and that recognition has been sufficient justification for their pursuit.

It's surprising that such an obvious genre as 'flower-piece' had remained so long untouched. The lush paint quality of 'Soft pink landscape', with its relish of romantic colour, tempted a further venture into this sweet mood with a subject hitherto unnoticed, possibly because of its easy charm.

Naturally there are inhibitions to overcome – flowery allure is an irrelevant anachronism in the context of cultural ideas in our period. It takes perversity and a touch or irony to make it tolerable. The three flower-piece paintings were made not from life but from three-dimensional postcards, the sort laminated with a lenticular plastic sheet and which create an illusion of

Technical note

Most colour printing processes nowadays utilize three primary inks (yellow, magenta, cyan) each printed from a separate plate or block. Mixing of these 'process' colours occurs, optically, on the paper to produce all intermediary hues. A further printing, black, helps to control contrast. For very fine quality it might be thought desirable to make additional printings of colours that are hard to achieve with the three inks, but that's rather special. In process work, the colours are separated photographically with film and filters and half-tone screens are interposed to break the continuous tones into dots.

Hand-worked colour etchings rely on other means. Inks are individually mixed and applied to specific areas of the plate. The number of colours printed with each impression is limited only by the ability of the printer to push ink into certain parts and wipe the surface clean without smearing into others. It is conceivable to print twenty or thirty different ink mixtures from a single plate with one passage through the press. As many plates as are necessary can be printed in this way.

'Trichromatic flower-piece' is printed from three plates each inked with only one colour: yellow, magenta or cyan, plus another for the normally added black. They were produced by the traditional methods of hand worked copper: line etching, aquatint, drypoint, burin, roulettes etc.

July 74

Turds

Since 1971 'Soft pink' has led to a scene as unlikely to me as it may be to its audience – a romantic view of nature in which the lyricism is tempered with a discordant vulgarity. My solution to an aesthetic problem has provoked some unforeseen responses. For example; when a critic of a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum referred to some of these as 'the only genuinely erotic' things in the show I could only naively disclaim that intention – but if that's what turns him on ... ? A collage/drawing, not exhibitable because of legal restraints, was said by a solicitor to be 'disgraceful disgusting and obscene'. My reply, that I thought it 'amusing rather than sinister, poetic rather than pornographic,' was not helpful. Some reservations required to be overcome to determine if a gallery in a public park was a suitable location for the exhibition though the ambience seemed to me ideal.

Curiously enough, the subject matter, seen in context, is subsidiary to the preoccupation with style and technique. The turd becomes a control, a standardised

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mixtures of grey tone values. Contact negatives made from the hand fabricated positives prepared the gelatine printing surface. After proofing, these negatives were further modified with acids, ink and scrapers to improve the results. Registration may have been perfect but colour quality inevitably left something to be desired so colour highlights were added to the print by the more autographic medium of silkscreen.

To complete the colour printing triptych, lithography was chosen for 'Flower-piece B'. In my own limited experience of the medium I had been forced to conclude that, even in the best of printer's hands, washes were likely to coarsen and subtleties of graduation harden up. In commercial lithography there is a technique of high quality printing in black and white known as duotone. Two plates are made, one specifically exposed for the lighter tones and another for the darks. The light plate might be printed in a reduced, grey, ink, and the other in full black. A greater tonal range is possible with this approach. I decided to apply the principle to colour printing from drawn stones, making two stones for each of the process colours but printing one in a reduced, transparent, ink – in other words, a duotone trichromatic printing. Finally it seemed that three stones per colour must be better than two so the outcome is a 'tritone trichromatic'.

Stones drawn with crayon are easier to work than wash drawings. To test this assumption a print study was made with four crayon drawn stones.

June 75

Sunsets

Jung's young dream bleeds into after-images of *Garden of Evil.* A lake of geranium ; cadmium oranges, yellow as Naples. Terre verte ultramarine : Indigo to violent Mars.

June 75

Exhibitions

Gimpel Fils, London, February 1950. Reaper engravings.

Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, July 4–August 31, 1951, *Growth and Form.*

Hanover Gallery, London, January 1955, Paintings

Hatton Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, May 1955 ; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, July 6–30, 1955, *Man, Machine and Motion.*

Whitechapel Gallery, London, August–September 1956, *This is Tomorrow.*

Hatton Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, June 3–9, 1957 ; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, August 13–24, 1957, *an Exhibit.*

Hanover Gallery, London, October 20–November 20, 1964, Paintings 1956–1964.

Robert Fraser Gallery, London, October–November 1966. Guggenheim reliefs and studies.

Galerie Ricke, Kassel, March 1967, drawings and prints.

Galerie Alexandre Iolas, New York, May 1–31, 1967. Paintings 1964–1967.

Studio Marconi, Milan, November 1968. Work 1957–1968.

Robert Fraser Gallery, London, April–May 1969. *Swingeing London* and beach scene paintings.

Württembergischer Kunstverein, May–June 1969, *Richard Hamilton Graphik 1973–1968.*

Galerie Hans Neuendorf, Hamburg, November 1969.

Studio Marconi, Milan, December 1969, *Cosmetic Studies.*

Galerie René Block, Berlin, January 1970, *Cosmetic Studies.*

The Tate Gallery, London, *Richard Hamilton,* March 12–April 19, 1970. Exhibition travelled to : Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, May 15–June 28, 1970 ; Kunsthalle, Bern, July 25–August 30, 1970.

Onnasch Galerie, Berlin, June 1970, *Richard Hamilton Complete Graphics.*

The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, September–October 1970 and Canadian tour to December 1971. Prints.

Studio Marconi, Milan, January 1971. *Recent Editions.*

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, February–March 1971. Prints and multiples.

Galerie René Block, Berlin, July 1971.

Catalogue

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1 **Soft pink landscape – study**
1971
Collage, colour pencils and watercolour
56 × 75.5cm

2 **Soft pink landscape**
1971–72
Oil on canvas
122 × 162.5cm

3 **Eine kleine schöne Scheisse**
1971
Black and red opaque ink on Mylar
30 × 24cm

4 **Eine kleine schöne Scheisse für Dieter**
1971
Collotype
45 × 35cm

5 **Flower-piece study (a)**
1971
Pastel, watercolour and gouache
53.5 × 40.5cm

6 **Flower-piece postcards a–c**
1971–72
Acrylic on 3D postcards
14.5 × 10.2cm

7 **Flower-piece 1**
1971–74
Oil on canvas
95 × 72cm

8 **Soft blue landscape – study**
1971
Pencil, ink, colour pencils and gouache
58.5 × 53.5cm

9 **By the waters of Miers**
1971–72
Etching, soft ground, sugar aquatint
85.5 × 69cm

10 **By the soft blue waters of Miers**
1971–73
Etching, soft ground, sugar aquatint, hand coloured
85.5 × 69cm

11 **Soft pink landscape – study I**
1972
Dy transfer, oil

18 **Surprised girl**
1972
Pencil, colour pencils, pastel, acrylic
58 × 46cm

19 **Girl surprised in the forest**
1972
Pastel and watercolour
59 × 47cm

20 **Esquisse**
1972
Hand-coloured etching
37 × 45cm

21 **A tutti i Mercanti d'Arte Moderna**
1972
Letterpress and acrylic
30 × 21cm

22 **Flower-piece study (b)**
1973
Colour pencils and acrylic
58.5 × 46cm

23 **Flower-piece study (c)**
1973
Pastels and acrylic
58.5 × 46cm

24 **Un des effets des eaux de Miers**
1973
Stipple etching and aquatint
15 × 20cm

25 **Flower-piece II**
1973–74
Oil on canvas
95 × 72cm

26 **Flower-piece III**
1973–74
Oil on canvas
95 × 72cm

27 **Trichromatic flower-piece progressives**
1973–74
Colour etchings
65 × 50cm

28 **Multi-coloured flower-piece**
1974
Colour etching

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35 **Flower-piece – trial proof 14**
1974
Colour etching with pastel
65 × 50cm

36 **Sunset (a)**
1974
Pastel
31 × 40cm

37 **Sunrise**
1974
Pastel
31 × 40cm

38 **Sunset (b)**
1974
Pastel
31 × 40cm

39 **Flower-piece A**
1974
Collotype and silkscreen
65 × 50cm

40 **Two flower-pieces**
1974 (with Dieter Roth)
Collotype and silkscreen
65 × 50cm

41 **Sunset (c)**
1974
Pastel
46.5 × 59cm

42 **Sunset (d)**
1974
Pastel
31 × 40cm

43 **Sunset (e)**
1974
Pastel
31 × 40cm

44 **Sunset (f)**
1975
Pastel
31 × 40cm

45 **Sunset (g)**
1975

2

3

17

Flowers

Nothing is more likely to stimulate my interest in a new subject than to notice a major pictorial genre that I have left unexplored. Over a period of twenty years or so the main classes have been covered : interior, nude, portrait, landscape, seascape, architecture, still-life, self-portrait – these are usually seen first as categories and that recognition has been sufficient justification for their pursuit.

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Naturally there are inhibitions to overcome – flowery allure is an irrelevant anachronism in the context of cultural ideas in our period. It takes perversity and a touch or irony to make it tolerable. The three flower-piece paintings were made not from life but from three-dimensional postcards, the sort laminated with a lenticular plastic sheet and which create an illusion of depth. Two of the three source postcards were tampered with. One had a toilet roll added to the fruit arrangement classically combined with flower-pieces ; another had some paint loosely applied and also the turd which had emerged from the association, in 'Soft pink landscape', of girls and toilet paper – glamour and shit.

This compulsion to defile a sentimental cliché was perhaps, though subconscious initially, a conformity with a well established tradition in the flower-piece,, the convention of placing, often lower right, a memento-mori : an insect, a crab, a skull – some sinister motif which suggests that life is not all prettiness and fragrance.

Whatever the reasons for involvement with a subject, each of the major classifications has its unique technical problems. A portrait demands a 'likeness', the delineation of a building will require some investigation of perspective methods ; the flower-piece genre should be, above all, about colour. Using paint to create colour effects, in this sense, is something that I have rarely found worthwhile, here it was to be the raison d'être. An etching on the theme was made concurrently with the paintings in which the colour interest was emphasised by introducing a technical problem, that of making colour separations, by hand, on copper plates.

Images on paper tend to have white borders ; over the years I have taken over these vacant spaces to varying degrees and with differing aims. The boundaries of the worked area in the flower-piece paintings, like those of the print, are loose because a severe conjunction of image and edge seemed alien to the freedom of the painted mark.

June 74

Turds

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Curiously enough, the subject matter, seen in context, is subsidiary to the preoccupation with style and technique. The turd becomes a control, a standardised reference to another reality – its function is to qualify an otherwise absurdly sentimental statement.

June 75

Colour printing

The three 'Flower-piece' paintings have, in the course of their completion, become a triptych. Each canvas in the group has since been subjected to a specific print medium : etching, collotype and lithography. Because colour *is* the subject, the opportunity was taken to apply 'process' colour printing concepts to traditional art printing techniques with separation being made empirically rather than through photographic filters.

The greatest problem with colour etching had been the difficulty of keeping the drawing on each plate reasonably in register with that on others, for colour mixing on the paper does appear to be a function of registration. Collotype's basic reliance on photographic films provided a simple solution to the registration problem. A black and white photographic negative was made from the painting of the subject and four full size positives on film were produced from this. Each of these was then nominated as being, potentially, the separation for either yellow, magenta, cyan or black. The film nominated 'yellow' was brushed with acid to clear, or reduce, opacity in those areas where there was least red or blue. It was drawn on or painted with ink to add or reinforce yellow marks. 'Cyan' and 'Magenta' were treated in the same way to provide the differing colour printing values from initially identical films. The advantage of the method was that registration was exact because all of the films were derived from the same source. The problem lay in assessing colour as optical

Sunsets

Jung's young dream bleeds into after-images of *Garden of Evil*. A lake of geranium ; cadmium oranges, yellow as Naples. Terre verte ultramarine : Indigo to violent Mars.

June 75

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Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, February–March 1971. Prints and multiples.

Galerie René Block, Berlin, July 1971.

Elvehjem Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin, September–October 1971. Prints.

Castelli Graphics, New York, December 1971–January 1972. *Richard Hamilton: Graphic Work.*

Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, January–February 1972. *Richard Hamilton: Prints, multiples and drawings.*

Nigel Greenwood Inc., London, May–June 1972. *Five Tyres remoulded.*

Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, June 1972. *Kent State and Release progressives.*

Studio Marconi, Milan, December 1972.

Galerie René Block, Berlin, February 1973.

Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, September 1973.

Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, Middletown (Connecticut), September 1973, *Complete Graphics.* American tour to 1975.

The Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (Ohio), January–February 1974

Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus Munich, March–April 1974.

Kunsthalle Tübingen, May–June 1974.

Galeria Cadaques, July 1974.

Nationalgalerie Berlin, July–August 1974.

Studio Marconi, Milan, November–December 1974.

Galeria Eude, Barcelona, May–June 1975.

Galeria Cadaques, August 1975.

Oil on canvas
95 × 72cm

8 **Soft blue landscape – study**
1971
Pencil, ink, colour pencils and gouache
58.5 × 53.5cm

9 **By the waters of Miers**
1971–72
Etching, soft ground, sugar aquatint
85.5 × 69cm

10 **By the soft blue waters of Miers**
1971–73
Etching, soft ground, sugar aquatint, hand coloured
85.5 × 69cm

11 **Soft pink landscape – study I**
1972
Dy transfer, oil
63 × 76.5cm

12 **Soft pink landscape – study II**
1972
Dy transfer, oil
63 × 76.5cm

13 **Soft pink landscape – study III**
1972
Dye transfer, oil
63 × 76.5cm

14 **Soft pink landscape IV**
1972
Dye transfer, chinagraph pencils, oil
63 × 76.5cm

15 **Girl with skirt up**
1972
Collage, pencil, acrylic, oil
56 × 40.5cm

16 **Etude pour les eaux de Miers**
1972
Pencil on paper
18 × 28cm

17 **Girl with tights down**
1972
Collage, acrylic, oil
58 × 46cm

Stipple etching and aquatint
15 × 20cm

25 **Flower-piece II**
1973–74
Oil on canvas
95 × 72cm

26 **Flower-piece III**
1973–74
Oil on canvas
95 × 72cm

27 **Trichromatic flower-piece progressives**
1973–74
Colour etchings
65 × 50cm

28 **Multi-coloured flower-piece**
1974
Colour etching
50.5 × 41.5cm

29 **Flower-piece – trial proof 8**
1974
Colour etching with pastel and acrylic
65 × 50cm

30 **Flower-piece – trial proof 9**
1974
Proof in black with acrylic
65 × 50cm

31 **Flower-piece – trial proof 10**
1974
Magenta proof with pastel
65 × 50cm

32 **Flower-piece – trial proof 11**
1974
Blue proof with pastel
65 × 50cm

33 **Flower-piece – trial proof 12**
1974
Proof in black with pastel
65 × 50cm

34 **Flower-piece – trial proof 13**
1974
Proof in black with pastel
65 × 50cm

Pastel
46.5 × 59cm

42 **Sunset (d)**
1974
Pastel
31 × 40cm

43 **Sunset (e)**
1974
Pastel
31 × 40cm

44 **Sunset (f)**
1975
Pastel
31 × 40cm

45 **Sunset (g)**
1975
Pastel
31 × 40cm

46 **Flower-piece B – study**
1975
Pencil and oil on paper
58.5 × 46cm

47 **Flower-piece B – cyan separation**
1975
Lithograph
65 × 50cm

48 **Flower-piece B – crayon study**
1975
Lithograph
65 × 50cm

49 **Flower-piece B**
1975
Lithograph
65 × 50cm

50 **Sunset (h)**
1975
Pastel
31 × 40cm

51 **Sunset (i)**
1975
Pastel
31 × 40cm

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Design and print / Sinc

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